Framework for Vermont's Early Childhood Comprehensive Assessment System

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Introduction

Mission statement

The Vermont Early Childhood Comprehensive Assessment System will ensure Vermont children, ages birth through third grade, reach their maximum learning potential by utilizing evidence-based, developmentally, linguistically, and culturally appropriate assessment methods. The system will generate data to inform continuous and sustainable improvement in services for young children through appropriate application of screening and assessment tools and related documentation.

Purpose

The purpose of this document is to provide a framework of currently utilized assessments and current initiatives that support child assessment and screening, as well as an initial plan for implementation of a statewide comprehensive assessment system for Vermont. Vermont's Framework is intended to be referenced and used over an extended period of time for reflection, self-evaluation, and improvement in Early Childhood (birth-3rd Grade) efforts. This Framework helps to address key questions facing those who are developing birth-3rd grade assessment approaches in their schools, districts, and communities.

From a planning and implementation perspective, Vermont's Framework helps to give a more global view of Early Childhood work. From an evaluation perspective, Vermont's Framework helps users think about the importance of evaluation and understanding and use of research based tools. It also makes a case for why assessment needs to be part of Birth-3rd grade approaches from the beginning. Vermont's Framework is an evolving document which will support local data collection, professional learning, and workforce development in the future.

> **Birth through Grade 3 initiatives and programs include:**
>
> Act 166: Public Pre-K
> Children's Integrated Services (CIS)/Early Intervention
> Early Childhood/ School Age Special Education
> Early MTSS and K-12 MTSS
> First School
> Preschool Expansion
> Title I Preschool and School Age/Migrant Preschool Services
> Vermont Early Learning Standards (VELS) Birth-Grade 3 aligned with Common Core
> Governor's Action Plan
> Child Find
> VCHIP

Audience

The framework is designed primarily for use by schools, school districts, early learning programs, regional and community partners, and state agencies.

Background

Vermont has discussed the need for a comprehensive assessment system that supports young children and families over the last decade. As things stand, there is no systematic picture of a child's growth and development through 3rd grade. Vermont educators and other professionals working with children (Birth-3rd Grade) often lack a common understanding about what to assess, what tools and measures to use and how assessment should be used. Absence of a comprehensive assessment system has made it difficult to answer key questions and make decisions, especially at the state or district/community level. These questions include:

> • *Are all young children learning and developing the skills and knowledge that will set them up for success when they enter kindergarten? Which children need additional support?*
>
> • *Are early elementary students making sufficient progress in math, reading, and social-emotional learning?*
>
> • *What professional learning development and interventions should the state prioritize and allocate resources for in the early years, given the progress children before 3rd grade are making in different areas of learning and development?*

For over a decade, various Vermont agencies have been working to build a unified early care, health and education system. Several programs and services have developed in an effort to support the system, including:

- Publicly funded prekindergarten education (pre-k) – a universally available program for all 3, 4, and 5 year olds not enrolled in kindergarten throughout the state. A child in public pre-k may be educated in a school-operated preschool, or in a high quality community-based preschool, Head Start, child care center or family home-based program
- Children's Integrated Services- a support service that brings together early intervention, family support, nursing, early childhood and family mental health, and specialized child care supports under one umbrella to provide a continuum of child and family development services for pregnant women and children prenatal to age 6

- *Help Me Grow* Vermont - - a statewide system that helps identify at-risk children through universal developmental surveillance, screening and detection for all children through age eight, and then links those children and their families to existing community-based services. *Help Me Grow* Vermont expands the reach of Children's Integrated Services through a "no wrong doors" centralized telephone access entry point provided by *Help Me Grow* Vermont 2-1-1 Child Development Specialists. Comprehensive outreach assures that child health and mental health providers, early care and education providers, family support workers and the community are involved in the system.
- Vermont's Early Childhood Action Plan - a blueprint for policy development at the state and community level to address the needs of young children and their families.

- Vermont has a comprehensive Child Find system including policies and procedures that are also coordinated with all other major efforts by other state agencies responsible for administering the various health, social service programs and education to ensure that each and every child who may be eligible for services under Part C (birth-age three) and Part B (ages three- twenty-one) are identified, located, screened, referred and evaluated. "Child Find" means the methods and procedures used by Part C CIS/EI or Part B school district personnel and other entities as defined in rule to locate children birth to age twenty-one who are in need of, or potentially in need of, early intervention services or special education and related services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Child find activities include a variety of public awareness activities, outreach strategies, developmental screening, ongoing assessment and evaluation.

- Vermont's existing system also includes a focus on alignment through the Common Core State Standards in English Language Arts and in Mathematics, the Next Generation Science Standards, and the Social Emotional Standards which are being implemented in K-12 classrooms across the state, and are resulting in changes to curriculum instruction and assessment. The [Vermont Early Learning Standards](#) (VELS) for birth through grade 3 were revised in 2015 to better capture the essential areas of development and learning in the early childhood years from infancy through grade three. VELS is aligned with the Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework, Common Core State Standards in English language arts and Mathematics, as well as Next Generation Science Standards. The purpose of these alignment efforts is to ensure a clear focus on skills and deeper knowledge that prepare all children for success in college and careers.

Finally, there is a greater emphasis on finding valid and reliable ways to assess young children's learning. Vermont's pre-k programs share a common research-based assessment system, Teaching Strategies GOLD, which has solidified, for early educators, the link between instruction and learning. Multi-tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) acknowledges meeting children where they are with universal high quality instruction, supportive environments, and building relationships for all children. MTSS and Early MTSS (for young children prior to kindergarten), provide

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targeted teaching and support for those children who need more instruction to gain skills, with intensive interventions available for children whose academic and social-emotional needs are the greatest.

In 2015, the document, *Strengthening and Streamlining Local Comprehensive Assessment Systems: Guidelines and Support Tools for Leadership Teams* was developed collaboratively by a team of Vermont educators and Agency of Education consultants and coordinators to provide guidelines to help supervisory unions streamline and strengthen their local comprehensive assessment systems, for all students. The document serves as a companion to this *Framework for Vermont's Early Childhood (Birth-3rd Grade Comprehensive Assessment System)*.

While many of the requisite tools and components needed to support a comprehensive system have been developed and a wide range of effective programs for families and children exists, Vermont recognized the need to eliminate overlap, inequities, and fragmentation.

Vermont identified the potential to help bring the patchwork of systems and programs together through the inclusion of a comprehensive assessment project in Vermont's Race to the Top- Early Learning Challenge grant. The grant supports the creation of a comprehensive assessment system that gathers information about the process of a child's early learning and development in order to help early childhood professionals make informed decisions regarding how best to support that child. This comprehensive assessment system supports the Early Learning Challenge grant's overall goal of building a high-quality and accessible early childhood system in Vermont so that all young children will be ready to succeed in kindergarten and beyond.

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What Is a Comprehensive Assessment System and Why Does it Matter?

The US Departments of Education and Health and Human Service define a comprehensive assessment system as "a coordinated and comprehensive system of multiple assessments – each of which is valid and reliable for its specified purpose and for the population with which it will be used – that organizes information about the process and context of young children's learning and development in order to help Early Childhood Educators make informed instructional and programmatic decisions."

At a minimum, a comprehensive assessment system includes developmental screening measures, formative assessments of the child's development, measures of environmental quality, and measures of the quality of adult-child interactions. We also recognize the importance of instructional practice.

Elements of a Comprehensive Assessment System
- ✓ Includes multiple forms of assessment of both children and early childhood programs and settings;
- ✓ Addresses the purposes and uses of data collected;
- ✓ Includes multiple types of assessments of children, such as screening tools, assessments of ongoing progress, diagnostic assessments, and measures that compare children's accomplishments to standards-based benchmarks;
- ✓ Emphasizes the importance of the technical quality of assessments; including their validity and reliability;
- ✓ Guides and motivates decisions at all levels, including among care givers, teachers, directors, administrators, and policy makers;
- ✓ Tracks trends in the population of young children moving from infant/toddler settings to preschool programs, from there to kindergarten and there to the primary grades.

- jointly defined by the U.S. Departments of Education and Health and Human Services

A comprehensive assessment system supports the earlier identification of children with or at-risk of developmental delays or disabilities through appropriate screening and evaluation process. It helps improve young children's learning experiences, including both the instruction and services they receive, by providing actionable data about the child's needs. The system support efforts to close the school readiness gap by using kindergarten-entry assessment results to inform decisions about practices and policies, and documents the importance of high quality early childhood programs in preparing children for school.
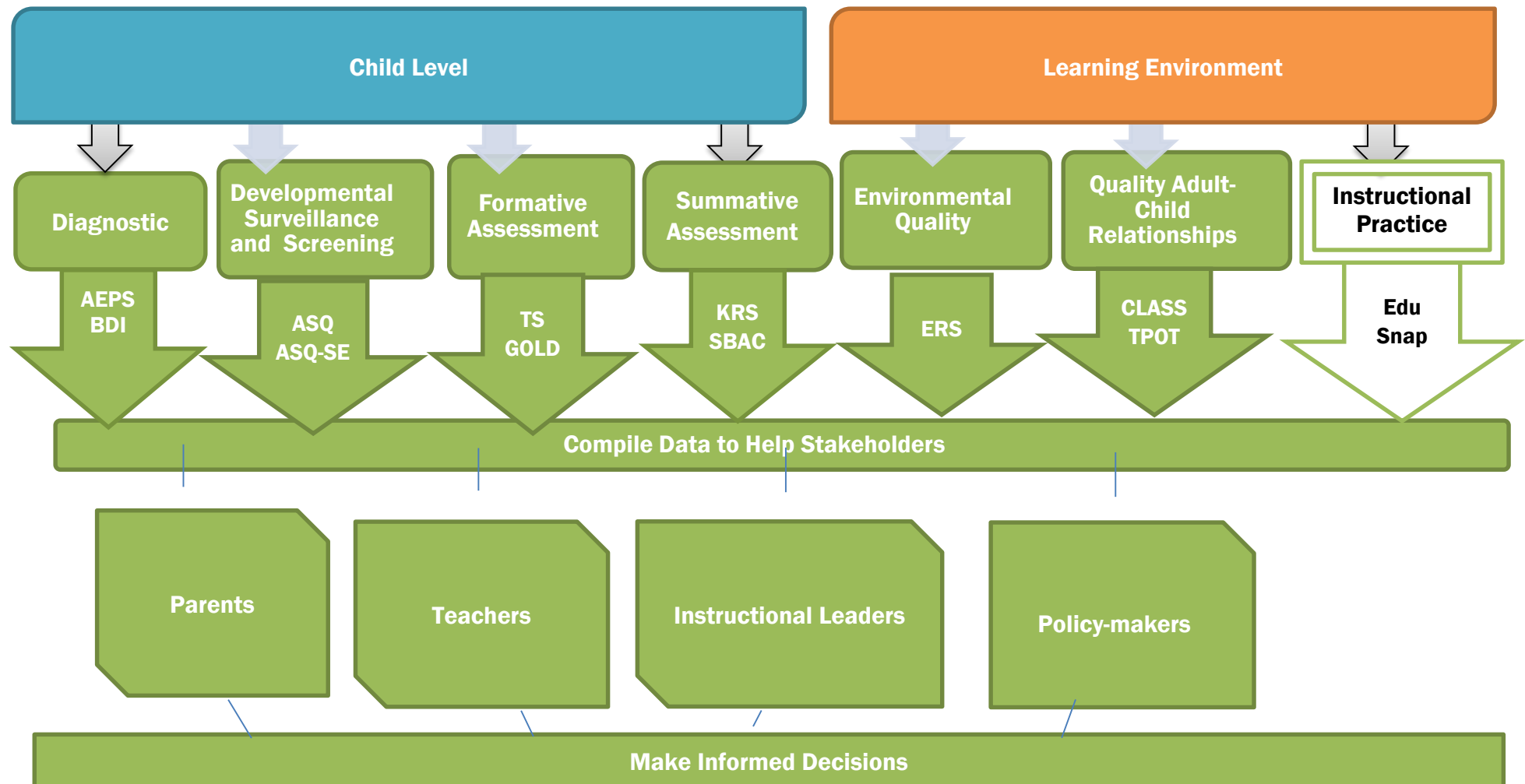
As children progress from infancy through to school age, a comprehensive assessment system gives parents, educators, pediatricians, and others, critical information about what opportunities and supports each child needs to thrive. It also helps capture the quality of the early learning and development programs children attend, and the relationships adults and children form.

Components of Vermont's Early Childhood Comprehensive Assessment System under the Early Learning Challenge Grant
The Birth through 3rd Grade assessments address the five domains of development that contribute to children's readiness to learn and succeed in school: physical well-being, social and emotional development, approaches to learning, language development and cognition.

The graphic on the following page depicts what a well-functioning Early Childhood Comprehensive Assessment System should include. In addition to Diagnostic, Developmental Surveillance and Screening, Formative Assessment, Summative Assessment, Measures of Environmental Quality, and Measures of the Quality of Adult-Child Interactions, Instructional Practice has been included. We recognize the importance of reflecting on and changing instruction to effectively address instruction in the classroom. Currently EduSnap is being piloted in several Vermont schools for this purpose.

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Assessing physical well-being, social &emotional development, approaches to learning, language development, and cognition

Child Level

Learning Environment

Diagnostic

AEPS
BDI

Developmental Surveillance and Screening

ASQ
ASQ-SE

Formative Assessment

TS
GOLD

Summative Assessment

KRS
SBAC

Environmental Quality

ERS

Quality Adult-Child Relationships

CLASS
TPOT

Instructional Practice

Edu
Snap

Compile Data to Help Stakeholders

Parents

Teachers

Instructional Leaders

Policy-makers

Make Informed Decisions

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Diagnostic

Diagnostic assessment can be used to investigate and analyze learning difficulties by indicating strengths and areas of need for children. It involves the gathering and careful evaluation of detailed data using a child's knowledge and skills in a given area. The data assist educational professionals to plan and identify appropriate focus for instruction/intervention through appropriate pedagogy, supporting targeted learning, and/or to more effectively scaffold the needs of children in their care. The results lead educators to explore and identify possible effective instructional/intervention approaches.

Adapted from the 'decision-making loop', Saubern, R (2010)

Examples of commonly used diagnostics:

The **Assessment Evaluation and Programming System (AEPS)** asseses children across six major developmental areas: fine motor, gross motor, cognitive, adaptive, social communication, and social. The assessment also assesses pre-academic content areas such as pre-literacy, numeracy, and pre-writing.
The **Battelle Developmental Inventory II (BDI II)** measures a child's progress along a developmental continuum by both the global domains and discrete skill sets.

Developmental Surveillance and Screening

Both developmental surveillance and developmental screening should be done for all young children. Surveillance is an ongoing, longitudinal, cumulative process of recognizing children who may be at risk of developmental delays. Surveillance may occur in primary care practices, early care and education settings or other environments applying population-based strategies for early detection of risk or problems. Developmental screening is the use of brief and objective standardized tools to identify children at risk of developmental delay and the need for referral for evaluation. It is a formal process that occurs at defined intervals and points of entry into services and any time a child is identified at risk through surveillance. Screening may occur at a primary care practice, a mental health agency, or other early childhood or provider settings. Interpretation of screening should take into consideration other child and family contextual factors in the determination of whether one or more referrals are needed. Why are surveillance and screening important? Developmental screening is an essential population health indicator; screening reaches vulnerable populations (children who are living in poverty, culturally and linguistically diverse, rurally isolated, etc.). Surveillance and screening promote public awareness of typical child development and advance early identification of children at risk for developmental or behavioral delays and disorders -- critical to the well-being of children and their families. Screening of all children, especially children with high needs, at regular intervals between birth and 3rd grade, is the first step toward identifying children and their families who may need additional services and connecting with the supports that are needed. High-quality screening practices, in alignment with the American Academy of Pediatrics Bright Futures Guidelines, improve the validity of results and ensure that instruments are used consistently.
Examples of recommended developmental screening instruments:

The **Ages & Stages Questionnaires®, Third Edition (ASQ-3™)** pinpoints developmental progress in children between the ages of one month to 5 ½ years. A widely used developmental screener, ASQ-3 screens infants and young children for developmental delays in the specific categories of self-regulation, compliance, social-communication, adaptive functioning, autonomy, affect, and interaction with people, during the crucial first 5 years of life.

The **Ages & Stages Questionnaires®: Social-Emotional, Second Edition (ASQ:SE-2™)** is a parent-completed, highly reliable questionnaire focused solely on social and emotional development in young children. Accurately identifying behavior through ASQ:SE-2 paves the way for further assessment, specialized intervention, or ongoing monitoring to help children reach their fullest potential during their most formative early years.

Formative Assessment

Formative assessment refers to assessment questions, tools, and processes that are specifically designed to monitor children's progress along the Vermont Early Learning Standards and to guide and improve instructional practice, and are valid and reliable for their intended purposes and their target populations. They are assessments that are designed for learning not of learning.
Examples of recommended formative assessment instruments:

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Teaching Strategies GOLD® (TSG) is used to assess children from birth through kindergarten. Extensive field tests have shown it to be both valid and reliable. Available online and in print, the system can be used with any developmentally appropriate early childhood curriculum. Grounded in 38 research based objectives that include predictors of school success and are aligned with the Common Core State Standards, state early learning guidelines, and the Head Start Child Early Learning Outcomes Framework, Teaching Strategies GOLD helps teachers focus on what matters most for school readiness. It can be used to support all types of learners, including children with special needs and children with advanced knowledge and skills.

Summative Assessment

Summative assessment refers to an assessment that typically documents how much learning has occurred at a point in time; its purpose is to measure the level of child, school, or program success (Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 2008). Examples of recommended summative assessment measures:

Vermont Kindergarten Readiness Survey is a readiness assessment of children entering kindergarten about students' knowledge and skills within the first six to ten weeks of school. The effort to measure school readiness is a collaborative project of the Vermont Agency of Education (AOE), the Vermont Department for Children and Families, and the Vermont Department of Health. There are many interpretations of what constitutes "readiness." Vermont's concept of children's readiness is multidimensional; it includes social and emotional development, communication, physical health, as well as cognitive development, knowledge, and approaches to learning (e.g., enthusiasm for learning, persistence, curiosity). Vermont's concept also reflects the belief that "school readiness" is interactional: children need to be ready for schools, and schools need to be ready to accommodate the diverse needs of children. Since 2000, surveys for assessing schools' readiness have been conducted several times.

Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) As a member of the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC), Vermont joined with a cadre of other states to develop the next generation of educational tests for English Language Arts/Literacy and Mathematics. SBAC is fully aligned with the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), use state of the art computer adaptive testing and accessibility technologies, and provides a continuum of summative, interim and formative tools that can be used for a variety of educational purposes. Testing occurs statewide in grades 3-12.

Measures of Environmental Quality

Measures of environmental quality signify valid and reliable indicators of the overall quality of the early learning environment. Example of the recommended environmental quality instrument:

Environmental Rating Scale (ERS) includes four environment rating scales, each designed for a different segment of the early childhood field. Each one of the scales has items to evaluate: Physical Environment; Basic Care; Curriculum; Interaction; Schedule and Program Structure; and Parent and Staff Education. The scales are suitable for use in evaluating inclusive and culturally diverse programs. The scales have proven reliability and validity.

(ECERS-R) The Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale-Revised: A thorough revision of the ECERS, designed to assess group programs for preschool-kindergarten aged children, from 2 through 5 years of age. Total scale consists of 43 items.

(ITERS-R) The Infant/Toddler Environment Rating Scale-Revised: A thorough revision of the ITERS, designed to assess group programs for children from birth to 2 ½ years of age. Total scale consists of 39 items.

(FCCERS-R) The Family Child Care Environment Rating Scale-Revised: A thorough revision of the FDCRS, designed to assess family child care programs conducted in a provider's home. Total scale consists of 38 items.

(SACERS) The School-Age Care Environment Rating Scale: Designed to assess before and after school group care programs for school-age children, 5 to 12 years of age. The total scale consists of 49 items, including 6 supplementary items for programs enrolling children with disabilities

Measures of the Quality of Adult-Child Interactions

Measures of the quality of adult-child interactions are the measures obtained through a valid and reliable process for observing how teachers and caregivers interact with children. The process should be designed to promote child learning and to identify strengths and areas for improvement for early learning professionals.

Examples of recommended quality adult-child interaction instruments:

The Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS®) is the observation tool developed to assess the adult- child interactions which impact learning and development from infant care through 12th grade. CLASS observations are completed by Teachstone trained CLASS Observers who assign scores to specific teacher behaviors and responses.

The **Teaching Pyramid Observation Tool (TPOT)** is an observation tool that measures the implementation of classroom practices specifically related to promoting young children's social emotional competence and addressing challenging behaviors.

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Measures of Instructional Practice

Research shows that classrooms in which educators demonstrate intentionality of their teaching are most likely to promote acquisition of academic skills (Bogner, Raphael, & Pressley, 2002; Pianta, 2003). Specifically, the most effective teachers provide more content to children and are more instructionally engaging. They structure their classrooms to allow for responsive instruction, the development of positive teacher-child relationships, ongoing assessment of children's needs, differentiated and informative feedback, and a repertoire of strategies to advance learning (Burchinal, et. al., 2008). Measures of instructional practice examine the intentional decisions educators make regarding aspects of a students learning throughout their day and how their decisions translate to the experiences children have in their educational settings.
Example of a currently piloted instructional practice instrument:

EduSnap provides educators with minute-by-minute picture of children's experiences in the classroom by quantifying their school day using codes classified into four components: Activity Settings, Content Areas, Student Learning Approaches, and Teaching Approaches. The data provide a unique lens through which educators consider how their curriculum and instructional practice impact the children in their classrooms. This perspective is intended to promote inquiry and reflection for the purposed of driving professional learning and guiding and monitoring efforts to improve the quality of learning experiences for children. EduSnap is currently being utilized in several Vermont schools as part of the First School project.

In order to support communities as they move toward accepting a comprehensive assessment system, the below matrix has been developed to illustrate the relationship of the instruments to the 2015 Vermont Early Learning Standards. The matrix also includes tentative timelines for administering as well as links to the assessments/screenings themselves.

Vermont's Early Childhood Comprehensive Assessment System Instruments under the Early Learning Challenge Grant Chart and Relationship to the 2015 Vermont Early Learning Standards (VELS)

INSTRUMENT	AGE	PURPOSE						Relationship to THE 2015 VERMONT EARLY LEARNING STANDARDS									TIME FRAME	ASSESSORS
								Developing Self			Communication and Expression			Learning About the World				
	Age range for use of the tool	Developmental	Formative Assessment	Summative Assessment	Environmental Quality	Quality of Adult-Child Interactions	Instructional Practice	Approaches to Learning	Social-Emotional Development	Growing, Moving, and Being Healthy	Language Development	Literacy Development	Creative Arts	Math	Science	Social Studies	When to administer	Who is administering
Ages & Stages Questionnaires ®, Third Edition (ASQ-3) (Available in English, Spanish, and a variety of languages which can be viewed on their website)	1 month- 5 ½ years	x						x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	21 questionnaires and scoring sheets at 2, 4, 6, 8, 9, 10, 12, 14, 16, 18, 20, 22, 24, 27, 30, 33, 36, 42, 48, 54, and 60 months of age Preferable- administer every 6 months; AAP recommendations include screening at least 3 times	Parents and caregivers administer **Scoring:** Classroom/home educators; Early Head Start and Head Start Providers; Children's Integrated Services Providers; home visitors through NFP, PAT, MECSH;

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Tool	Age																	Description	Administered by
									x									before a child's third birthday (at the 9-month, 18-month, and 24- or 30-month)	Primary Care Physicians
Ages & Stages Questionnaires ®: Social-Emotional, Second Edition (ASQ:SE-2™) (Available in English, Spanish, and a variety of languages which can be viewed on their website)	1 month-6 years	x							x								x	9 questionnaires and scoring sheets at 2, 6, 12, 18, 24, 30, 36, 48, 60, and 72 months of age. Administer to reliably identify young children at risk for social or emotional difficulties.	Parents and caregivers administer **Scoring:** Classroom/home educators; Early Head Start and Head Start Providers; Children's Integrated Services Providers; home visitors through NFP, PAT, MECSH; Primary Care Physicians
Teaching Strategies Gold®	Birth-Grade 3		x						x	x	x	x		x		x	x	x	Observation and data collection should be ongoing throughout the school year. Checkpoints are due in mid-Fall and late Spring;	Classroom/home educators; directors/principals; observers; Head Start providers

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																	Winter and Summer checkpoints are optional.	
Vermont Kindergarten Readiness Survey	All children entering K			x				x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	First 6 weeks of Kindergarten	Kindergarten Teachers
Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale, Revised Edition (ECERS-R) (English and Spanish)	2 years- 5 years				x			x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		Anchor Trainers, Level 1, and Level 2 Observers (Classroom/home educators; directors/principals; observers; STAR assessors, Head Start providers)
Infant/Toddler Environment Rating Scale- Revised (**ITERS**)	Birth to 2 ½ years of age.				x			x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		Anchor Trainers, Level 1, and Level 2 Observers (Early Head Start providers use ITERS)
The Family Child Care Environment Rating Scale-					x			x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		Anchor Trainers, Level 1, and Level 2 observers

Assessment	Age																	Notes	Conducted By
Revised **FCCERS-R**																			
The School-Age Care Environment Rating Scale SACERS	5 years to 12 years				x			x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x		Anchor Trainers, Level 1, and Level 2 Observers (Classroom teachers/ administrators
Classroom Assessment Scoring System **(CLASS)**	Infant Toddler Pre-K K-3					x		x	x									Baseline data -fall and final data late spring (minimum)	Certified CLASS observers
Teaching Pyramid Observation Tool (TPOT)	Pre-K					x		x	x	x								Biannually (beginning and end of year)	Certified TPot coaches (Early MTSS coaches)
EDU SNAP	PreK-Grade 5						x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	Baseline and final data dates TBD	Certified EduSnap Observers

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Accomplishments and Moving Forward with Implementation

The Early Childhood Comprehensive Assessment System Task Force in collaboration with a variety of stakeholders is committed to providing the types of supports and tools necessary to assist communities and practitioners to develop comprehensive assessment systems. A companion guidebook to Vermont's Early Childhood Comprehensive Assessment System will be developed to aid in implementation and give more direction to teachers and practitioners. The sections below provide detail about the status and future produced plans.

Current accomplishments to date include
- The recommended assessments have been identified.
- Trainings on the assessments have been established and/or are in process
- A matrix detailing the alignment of the assessment(s) with The Vermont Early Learning Standards (VELS) has been created

Sustainability - Future considerations to endure the successful implementation of Vermont's system include
- Developing planning tools for implementation
- Coordinated use of universal screening
- Develop ongoing supports for teachers, principals, district leader and program directors
- Coordination with higher education
- Help teachers and leaders use assessment data within the context of the quality of environments
- Communities of Practice
- Fostering a professional learning system and aligning professional learning
- Outline policies regarding collecting and sharing of data
- Timing and coordination of assessments
- Stakeholder engagement and investment
- Cultivating a plan for sustainability, including personnel and financial capacity, beyond the grant
- Provide teacher and education leaders with time and support to collect, analyze, and use data and engage parents
- Embed use of assessment knowledge in licensure, pre-service, and in-service
- Guidebook sustainability

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Professional Learning

In order to make the comprehensive assessment system work, teachers and education leaders need the knowledge and skills to conduct assessments and to use the results appropriately and effectively. A system must be put in place that stresses the intentional use of pre-service, in-service, and communities of practice, in order to enhance teachers' and leaders' capacity to use assessment to serve children. Professional learning will focus on building teachers' and leaders' capacity to use assessment to support learning and development and improve practice. Public and private partners will collaborate to support pre-service as well as ongoing, accessible training and professional learning on administration of assessment instruments, observation skills, compiling/analyzing of data, data driven decision making, and communication of information. This professional learning will be aligned with existing systems including the Agency of Education's educator license, in order to ensure sustainability, including alignment. Professional learning will be embedded into curricula at VT institutes of higher education and aligned with the Early Childhood Career Ladder. Work will also be done to align professional learning and knowledge of the assessments with child care licensing, the STARS program, and accreditation processes.

"A system must be put in place that stresses the intentional use of pre-service, in-service and communities of practice, in order to enhance teachers' and leaders' capacity to use assessment to serve children."

Compiling, Sharing, and Use of Data

In order for the comprehensive assessment system to improve outcomes for Vermont's children, there needs to be a clear approach to collecting, sharing, and using data. Having this data will inform early childhood program activities, instruction, and quality improvements, it will support early educators in engaging with, educating, and supporting families. It will also help promote informed policy making across sectors that supports children's optimal development. Input will occur from the Building Better Futures Data and Evaluation committee. Data sharing and transparency is paramount. Concurrently with the development of the Comprehensive Assessment System, the Data Governance Committee will be developing protocols for data sharing across agencies.

Ultimately, the critical measure of whether a comprehensive assessment system is effective is by how well it works to improve outcomes for young children and their families, especially children with high needs. In order to assure families are partners in our efforts, the Comprehensive Assessment System Task Force will ultimately include evidence-based recommendations for sharing information gleaned from the implementation of the comprehensive assessments with families in its companion guidebook to the Framework for Vermont's Early Childhood Comprehensive Assessment System plan.

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The Comprehensive Assessment Workgroup will work in coordination with the broader developing early childhood Data Governance efforts to help answer questions such as:

- Where will the data be stored and collected?

- What are the possible uses for this data?

- Is there a clean point of entry on each child?

- Who will review the results of assessments and screenings?

- When will the data be considered?

- How will they be used? What support will be offered to those using the data?

- How will outcomes be monitored and used to

A system of support for regular training and observation of the tool needs to be set in place. Administrators, teachers, parents, and other stakeholders must be provided training and professional learning to reliably collect and interpret data. Such training and professional learning should present a detailed understanding of the purposes and processes of birth-grade 3 assessment systems

Fostering an understanding of the system can improve comfort with the system as well as reliability. However, this involves adequate time and resources. In order to be useful to teachers, it is important that time is allocated, both in pre-service and in-service training, to interpret and reflect on the meaning of the findings to help inform and improve practice.

Timing and Coordination

Guidance will be developed about key points in time when each assessment should be conducted, and by whom. Systems need to be in place and awareness needs to be built on how data moves and where it lives.

"Assessment information alone is useless; it should invite action. Educators must be wise consumers of assessment data, understanding its properties and appropriate uses. The data and information provided by assessment must be examined, discussed, reflected upon, and used to make decisions… Educators at different grade levels may gather different types and amounts of assessment data but they are, nevertheless, each responsible for understanding and using information to improve instruction and learning for all students,"(p.27).
        -As stated by the Vermont Statewide Steering Committee on Response to Instruction and Intervention (2014)

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Stakeholder Engagement is Key to Success

In order for this system to work, everyone who plays a role in the system need to be actively engaged in the implementation process and understand how the system supports them. Parents need to understand the information each assessment and/or screening provides about their child's progress, and be actively involved in decision making about how best to support their child moving forward. Likewise, parents and guardians understanding how to access available resources in order to support their child, is paramount. Teachers, principals, and administrators need time and training to understand the data in each assessment and how to use it to engage with families and drive decision making. They also need support in balancing a variety of assessments and screening tools. Physicians and community providers need to understand their vital role in detection, and need for increased communication and coordination. It is important that state policymakers learn about the assessment system and be able to reflect on the meaning of the findings in order to make informed policy decisions.

> Vermont created an Early Childhood Assessment System Task Force to evaluate and create this plan. This group represents a myriad of cross-sector and interagency professionals sharing a common vision of an Early Childhood Comprehensive Assessment System which integrates and aligns Vermont initiatives with the mission to enrich and sustain.

Notes on Process and Content

Early Childhood Comprehensive Assessment Task Force

Vermont Agency of Education

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Specialized Assessment Considerations

The Vermont Comprehensive Assessment System Framework works in concert with other state and local assessments that are used throughout Vermont on a regular and consistent basis. These individual assessments should be used in conjunction with several other sources of evidence, as instructional decisions are best based on multiple sources of evidence. This is not intended to be a comprehensive list of administered assessments. Further, this list is *not a recommended or endorsed list*; rather, it is a list of commonly used assessments in early childhood settings.

Currently and consistently in place throughout the state

Modified Checklist for Autism for Toddlers (M-CHAT); Modified Checklist for Autism for Toddlers Revised with Follow-Up (M-CHAT- R/F) is a 2-stage parent-report screening tool to assess risk for Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). The M-CHAT-R/F is an autism screening tool designed to identify children 16 to 30 months of age who should receive a more thorough assessment for possible early signs of autism spectrum disorder (ASD) or developmental delay. The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends that all children receive autism-specific screening at 18

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and 24 months of age, in addition to broad developmental screening at 9, 18, and 24 months. The M-CHAT-R/F, one of the AAP recommended tools, can be administered at these well-child visits.

[ACCESS for ELLs (Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State for English Language Learners)](#) is a secure large-scale English language proficiency assessment given to Kindergarten through 12th graders who have been identified as English language learners (ELLs). It is given annually in WIDA Consortium member states, such as Vermont, to monitor students' progress in acquiring academic English.

Strengthening and Streamlining Local Comprehensive Assessment Systems: Guidelines and Support Tools for Leadership Teams serves as a companion document to the Framework for Vermont's Early Childhood (Birth-3rd Grade) Comprehensive Assessment System. The purpose of this document is to provide guidelines to help supervisory unions streamline and strengthen their local comprehensive assessment systems for all students using four core principles (collaboration, responsive decision making and instruction, range of assessment data and proficiency based outcomes).

Assessments currently being piloted

The Mid-Level Developmental Assessment (MLDA) is a feasible and effective, evidence-based model for the timely assessment of children (ages 0-6 years) suspected of developmental delay on the basis of surveillance and screening. Children with mild/moderate developmental and behavioral concerns are efficiently linked to programs and services, while facilitated access is coordinated for children with more severe delays to additional comprehensive assessment and services. After an initial pilot, the Health Department Child Development Clinic (CDC) has adapted the MLDA model to accommodate our clinic's protocols. The MLDA-plus model supports streamlined assessment practices, well suited for CDC's statewide travel clinics. With training and consultation from the *Help Me Grow* National Center, early educators have started piloting the MLDA in Early Childhood Special Education programs in order to support quality improvements in their current screening and assessment protocols.

Teaching Strategies GOLD®: Birth Through Third Grade is being piloted in several Vermont schools as a segment of the First School project. As part of the expansion through third grade, the Common Core State Standards will be embedded in Teaching Strategies GOLD® for grades K-3. Teachers using the tool for kindergarten through third grade will be able to assess directly on the Common Core State Standards for English language arts and mathematics, in addition to the other Teaching Strategies GOLD® domains. With progressions of development and learning that extend as far back as birth, Teaching Strategies GOLD® will help Birth through Third teachers identify where children actually are in their development and learning and how to support their continued growth, in addition to determining where they are in meeting end-of-year expectations specified by the Common Core State Standards.

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Glossary

Commonly used acronyms

AHS – Agency of Human Services
AOE – Agency of Education
BBF – Building Bright Futures
CDD – Child Development Division (within CDD)
CIS – Children's Integrated Services (within CDD)
DCF – Department for Children and Families (within AHS)
ECLI – Early Childhood Leadership Institute (Project 3)
ELC – Early Learning Challenge Grant
GOV – Governor's Office
HMG – Help Me Grow (Project 12)
KRS – Kindergarten Readiness Survey (Project 18)
M.A.T.C.H. – Mentoring, Advising, Teaching, Coaching, Consulting, and Helping (Project 15)
PAT – Parents As Teachers (Project 11)
RBA – Results Based Accountability
RFP – Request for Proposals
T.E.A.C.H. - Teacher Education And Compensation Helps (Project 16)
VCCICC – Vermont Child Care Industry and Careers Council
VAEYC – Vermont Association for the Education of Young Children
VDH – Vermont Department of Health (within AHS)
VELS – Vermont Early Learning Standards

Terms

- Reliability
- Validity
- Physical Well-Being
- Cognition
- Social and Emotional Development

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- Language Development
- Approaches to Learning
- Early Childhood Special Education
- VELS
- First School
- Act 166
- Preschool Expansion

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